

SUMATRAN EXPEDITION

JANUARY 1985

by Greg Russell, 71 Melrose Drive, Flindersview, Queensland, 4305, Australia

It is difficult to describe the elation I felt as the Qantas 747 lifted off from Brisbane. What made the trip so enjoyable was the knowledge that within a few days, my friends and I would be trekking in the remote Sumatran jungles. The first week my wife, Lea, and I spent shopping and sight-seeing in Singapore. One trip to Sentosa Island, a tourist attraction in Singapore Harbour, rewarded us with the discovery of *N. rafflesiana* and *N. gracilis* growing near Fort Siloso. Lea returned to Brisbane, and on the following morning, I flew out to Jakarta.

I had not been to Jakarta before and my first impression when stepping from the air-conditioned comfort of the plane into the thick, humid atmosphere is that it hits one like a hot, wet blanket. Fortunately, the customs and immigration checks were quick and I was met outside the terminal by Roger and Marjan Shivas who had arrived from Perth. The three of us had spent the previous twelve months planning, by cor-

respondence, our expedition to Sumatra. It was great to be together again and ready to commence the expedition that we had worked towards for so long.

The rest of the day was spent taking in the sights of Jakarta. The next afternoon we left by bus to travel north through Java, then across the Sunda Straits and along the Trans Sumatran Highway to the Padang Highlands. The 42 hour bus journey is an exciting trip and one not easily forgotten. Rice paddies, tropical jungles, screaming monkeys, exotic birds, and a foreign culture and traditional architecture of the villages that we passed made the trip one of the highlights of our expedition. An overcrowded bus, sleepless nights, unfamiliar food and the occasional breakdown were small prices to pay.

On our arrival in Bukittinggi we found accommodation and made arrangements to climb Mt. Sago (2,762 m). The following

As a matter of clarification, Gulf coast bogs do not quake; you do the quaking! Our CPs thrive best where water bubbles up from subsurface streams, usually via crayfish holes. We call this type of water flow "artesian", and often it has a sulfurous odor. Where the subsoil water is not present, CPs are scattered and depend on rainwater and the sponge-like action of the soil. Rabies in the native animal population is common and to be feared.

I had a wonderful time, and if I ever recover I will write again about the *Drosera* and *Pinguicula* in the same area.

Dr. T.L. Mellichamp is an associate Professor of Biology, University of N. Carolina at Charlotte. A quiet and reserved person in public and an overgrown "Teenager" when in the field, he has a mesmeric attitude that totally captures heart and soul of his students; he

is the typical "absent-minded Professor."

Mr. Steve Broyles is a graduate student at the University of Georgia at Athens. Steve is quite serious and business-like, very observant, sharp-minded as a razor blade and will hopefully be one of our future botanists. He is a former student of Dr. Mellichamp's. When in the "field" working, there is no play; and when he relaxes, that is also total, thoroughly enjoying himself at leisure time. An up-and-coming "Southern Gentleman" of the First Water. This young man I predict will be one of our most knowledgeable and respected Botanist-Biologists for the future. Dr. Mellichamp is very fortunate to have Steve for assistant, but I am the most fortunate in having the pleasure of observing them work together. I look forward to the next expedition. (See p. 102 for additional photos.)



N. treubiana, lower pitchers. Near Sibolga.



N. treubiana, upper pitcher. Near Sibolga.



N. carunculata, lower pitcher, found on Mt. Sago.



N. treubiana, intermediate pitchers. Near Sibolga.

Photos by Greg Russell.



N. singalana, upper pitcher. Mt. Singgalang.



N. singalana, lower pitcher. Mt. Sago.



N. singalana, peristome of lower pitcher. Mt. Sago

morning we woke at 5:30 a.m., eagerly looking forward to our first climb and hopefully our first Sumatran pitcher plant. After a short drive to the base we started our climb. The conditions were not ideal for the first few hours and intermittent rain made the journey rather uncomfortable. Four hours later we found *N. gymnamphora* growing in an exposed area on the trail. The first notable feature is the small lanceolate leaves compared to the size of the pitchers on the rosette plants. The rosette pitchers were ovate with an oblique mouth. The peristome was flat and finely toothed on the inner margin. The pitchers were green with purple spots covering the outside and the peristome was green. No upper pitchers were found although one female plant was found in seed.

After another half hour climb we found a plant that we at first believed to be *N. pectinata*. The description in Danser's monograph describing the lower and upper pitchers of the plants that we found were quite different. The upper pitchers resembled Danser's description of *N. carunculata*. Locating this species made the planning and physical hardships of our trip all worthwhile. The lower pitchers were 20 cm high and cylindrical in shape with 4 cm wide finely ribbed peristome. After taking photographs and collecting some seed we started our descent, arriving back at our hotel just after dark. That night we were joined by the fourth member of our party, Moya Tomlinson, who had just spent three months in China traveling.

The next two days were spent resting and arranging our climb up Mt. Singgalang (2,877 m). Mt. Singgalang is very steep and treacherous, and an extremely difficult climb. *N. gymnamphora* was found just off the trail. Three hours later we reached an open area where we rested and took in the view of Mt. Merapi and surrounding mountains. We continued on for another hour before reaching the summit where there is a crater lake surrounded by dense moss forest. In this moss forest a small population of *Nepenthes* was found. The plants appeared to be *N. singalana*. The peristomes did not fit

the description of *N. singalana* but we are convinced it is.

Our evenings were spent in one of two local coffee houses that served European and Indonesian meals as well as cold beer. Most tourists who travel in Sumatra pass through Bukittinggi and eat in these coffee houses. The market place in Bukittinggi is one of the largest in Sumatra and it was an experience to spend a couple of hours there. All the equipment needed for an expedition (jungle knives, backpacks, clothes and food) can be purchased here at reasonable prices.

A second attempt was made to reach the summit of Mt. Sago. We left Bukittinggi early in the morning for Parambang where we started our climb. After walking for an hour through the rice paddies we found the jungle path and started our ascent. The jungle is a beautiful place with its birds, monkeys, squirrels and insect life. Walking amongst the trees, orchids, hoyas, impatiens, palms and vines made our climb an adventure in itself. *N. gymnamphora* and *N. singalana* were found near the summit. On both climbs of Mt. Sago we saw signs of tigers. We were later informed by the local people that there were tigers in the area and that there had been three recent attacks on nearby villages.

That night we decided to forego our plans of climbing Mt. Merapi and instead the next day we left for Padang and from here we travelled fifteen hours by bus to Sungaipenuh, the largest town in the vicinity of Mt. Kerinci (3805 m).

Mt. Kerinci is in the centre of a large National Park and a permit is required to enter the park. After a further 2 hours by opelet we reached a village at the base of Mt. Kerinci where we stayed at the National Park headquarters. Mt. Kerinci is an active volcano which last erupted in 1958. Setting out at 3 a.m. with a park ranger we reached the summit ten hours later. The view was spectacular—crater lakes, tea plantations, rice paddies and mountainous countryside stretching to the coast.

During the climb, one *Nepenthes* was found by the trail. This plant resembled the plants found on Mt. Singgalang. It was the only *Nepenthes* found although a large population could be seen growing high up in the tree tops on another spur across a deep ravine. We could not reach them from where we were so identification was impossible. This was a big disappointment considering the time and effort we had put into getting to and climbing Mt. Kerinci.

In Padang we arranged a trip for the next day to Mt. Talang (2,597 m). Right from the start we were troubled by leeches, as we had run out of repellent we had no choice but to put up with them. The trail that we chose was not well used and soon turned into an impenetrable jungle. However, we found a large population of a very red form of *N. gymmophora* as well as one plant of *N. carunculata* that was found growing on an exposed ridge. Unfortunately, our schedule did not allow us time to make another attempt on the summit. We left Padang by plane for Medan the following day.

Medan is typical of most large Indonesian cities: very crowded and tiring, compounded by the strange and dangerous driving habits of the Indonesians. Our stay in Medan was brief and within the hour we were on a bus bound for Prapat, a town situated on the shores of Lake Toba. Lake Toba is 80 km long and 26 km wide. In the middle of the lake is Samosir Island. It is a fantastic sight with its steep pine covered slopes sweeping down to the blue-green water of the lake.

At Prapat we were joined by Martin Shiva, an experienced traveller in this part of the world, who joined us for the rest of the trip. After hiring transport we started out for Sibolga, a town on the west Sumatran coast. *Nepenthes tobaica* grows abundantly along the roadside around Prapat. Near Sibolga *N. gracilis*, *ampullaria*, *alata*, *reinwardtiana* and *N. treubiana* were found. *N. treubiana* is a striking plant with distinct lower, intermediate and upper

pitchers. Seed of these species was collected. The Sumatran form of *N. alata* has no glandular crest and at first we were doubtful of the identity of this species. However, Macfarlane described this plant (refer Danser's monograph) as not always having a keel.

The next morning was spent exploring the roadside and that afternoon we returned to Prapat where we parted. Roger, Marjan, Moya and Martin left for a week's rest on Samosir Island and then to Mt. Sinabung, while I packed my bags and headed for home.



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